

**THE PRE-EMINENCE OF
THE BIBLE AS A BOOK**



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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

ALFRED TYLER PERRY

Professor of Bibliology in Hartford Theological Seminary

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In accepting the appointment as Professor of Bibliology in this Hartford Theological Seminary, I appreciate the fact that I am entering upon a unique office. In few institutions of higher learning is the librarian given a voice in shaping the policy or assisting in the government; in still fewer, only three or four, does he give instruction in subjects germane to his department; in no other theological seminary, so far as I am aware, and in only two colleges or universities, is his department raised to the dignity of a distinct professorship. It is a great satisfaction and encouragement to me to find here on the part of Trustees and Faculty so high an estimate of the library as an integral part of the institution, and necessary to the highest efficiency of every other part.

Though my title changes with this advancement, my duties remain the same as they have been for the past eight years. I desire, therefore, to express my thanks for the kindly appreciation of my endeavors in the past to fulfill these duties, which is shown by this promotion; and I am glad of the opportunity this occasion affords of making acknowledgment of the help I have received from those with whom I have been associated. Two assistants, Mr. Hawks and Miss Hamilton, have been with me all these years, and have labored unremittingly and intelligently for the interests of the library. To their faithfulness and efficiency a large meed of praise should be given. On the part of my brethren of the Faculty there have been uniform kindness, and willingness to co-operate with me, and charity for my ignorance and mistakes. With the single exception of not allowing me funds enough, a limitation for which they have not been entirely responsible, the Trustees have been considerate of the

interests I have had in charge. To several members of the Board I am under special obligations. To you, sir,* at whose hands I to-night have received my induction into office, both library and librarian are greatly indebted. An interest extending over many years has found expression in plans and labors, in exertion of influence, and expenditure of energy, that our noble collection of books might be formed and be fittingly housed. I would pay a tribute of thanks also to Mr. John Allen, who, as chairman of the Building Committee of the Library, and as chairman of the Executive Committee of the Trustees, has always been hospitable to my suggestions and requests, and has never denied me anything it was in his power to grant; and to Dr. A. C. Thompson, one of the best friends any librarian ever had.

It is fitting that we should always remember when we think of the library that we owe its beautiful building and its manifold treasures chiefly to the generosity of Mr. Newton Case, whose monument it has become; while the scholarly mind and broad vision of our President have made ours the best theological library in America. With suitable endowment it can be made the best in the world.

I should shrink from accepting this position were the old conception of the office of a librarian held here. To be an encyclopedia of information in regard to all branches of knowledge, or a thesaurus of quaint and curious facts dug up from the deepest recesses of musty tomes, to spend one's time in following out obscure trails in recondite subjects, to become a book-worm, reading simply for the sake of reading without practical result in the real life of the world, — this has for me no attractions. It is to me a grateful fact that our President has himself outlined a far different ideal. If to be a librarian means to seek to make the library useful by a careful administration, to be a guide to readers, to point out to inquirers where they may profitably dig for themselves in the investigation of special subjects, to make plain the best methods of literary research, to seek further to build up the library by such purchases as will fill gaps and develop specialties, and so make and keep it representative and complete, — if study and labor for these ends is the work to which

* Mr. Jeremiah M. Allen, of the Board of Trustees.

I am summoned, then I am ready to accept the charge, although conscious of sad deficiencies in qualifications.

The Bible is for the Christian the Book of Books. It is the revelation of God given him to be his guide through this life, that he may attain unto the life eternal. In it he learns of the divine plan of redemption, with it in his hand he has a treasury of counsel suitable to every circumstance of life; in sorrow it is his comfort, in time of temptation his refuge, and in all the conflicts of the kingdom, his sword of the Spirit. As he reads it he hears the very voice of God speaking to him in warning and encouragement, in command and consolation. For the theologian, too, the Bible holds the same supreme place. It is his chief textbook, and his final court of appeal. Here he finds the facts of his system, and the norm of their combination and relation.

It is not so generally felt or acknowledged that for the bibliographer no less than for the Christian and the theologian the Bible is the Book of Books. On the occasion, therefore, of the induction into office of a Professor of Bibliology in this theological seminary, it may not be unfitting to dwell upon the theme, — “The Pre-eminence of the Bible as a Book.” We here take no cognizance of the great and important place filled by the Bible in the world of thought. It has been the inspiration of countless writers. Poets and philosophers, historians and essayists have received instruction from its truths, and their pages are lighted up by the reflected glory of its high thoughts and exalted imagery. It would be an inquiry of deepest interest to trace in the literature of every age the influence of this supreme book of the world; but it is not to the teachings of the Bible, or its artistic form to the effect of its truth or its style on the literatures of the world that we would direct attention.

The Bible is a book. It has been written, printed, and bound. As such it has a history in many respects fascinating and suggestive. When God revealed his will to men, he did it through earthly media. He caused his word to be written for our instruction. The divine has dwelt in human form; the eternal verities have been committed to the minds and hands of weak and erring men. The truth of God has been expressed

in the imperfect medium of human language, has been handed down from generation to generation by the pen of the scribe, has been embalmed in the printed page, has been passed on from one dialect to another, has been scattered broadcast over the earth by the labors of men. Since these instrumentalities have been thus divinely honored, it is surely of importance to trace the history of this divine-human product, that we may understand the limitations put upon the divine soul by the human body in which it dwells, as well as the dignity and efficiency accorded to the human flesh by reason of the divine spirit breathed into it. Evidence is not lacking that the divine care has extended even to the more material features of this book. There has indeed been no miraculous intervention to deliver the Bible from the chances of worldly affairs, its wars and conflagrations, the strife and ignorance and fallibility of scribes and translators, the mold and decay of cloister and crypt; and yet the God who gave has certainly by his providence protected his gift from destruction, and has preserved its integrity to the present hour.

It is to certain aspects of this history that I ask your attention. We pass by entirely, for the purposes of this evening's discussion, any consideration of the structure or contents or doctrinal teachings of the Bible; we shall endeavor to set forth the supremacy of the Bible as a book among other books. In this we limit ourselves strictly to the field of bibliology. We fix our eyes on features which are purely external. We readily grant that these are the less important. It is far more necessary to discover the truth of the Word than to know the varied forms in which it has appeared or the means by which it has been transmitted to us. There are many blessed in its reading through the help of the Spirit who are ignorant of every one of the facts to which we shall call attention; they do not need to know them in order to gain the highest benefit from its perusal. And yet we are persuaded that our inquiry is not altogether in vain, for every slightest item regarding this book is of value to those who esteem it so highly, and we believe that even from this external history of the Bible we may gain lessons of importance to our faith.

I. The Bible is pre-eminent among all the books of the world, even in its manuscript form. For many centuries, in

common with all other books of that early period, it existed solely in this form. But of all the books of antiquity the Bible is supreme in the number and variety of its manuscript remains. The science of paleography would be most seriously handicapped if there were taken from its resources the abundant material thus supplied. The Old Testament portions furnish almost the only specimens of Hebrew chirography. The New Testament portions illustrate better than any other single book the development of writing among the Greeks and Romans. The early versions afford not only an opportunity for studying the written characters of those languages, but the dialects themselves. Christian art, too, finds much of interest and value in the illuminations which adorn many of these manuscript Bibles. The Vatican and Sinaitic codices are not equaled by any manuscripts of any sort for size and simple beauty, and as examples of the early form of Greek writing. None surpass for modest elegance the Golden Gospels in Latin of the time of Charlemagne, written throughout in gold letters on purple vellum.* None show more beautiful and instructive miniatures than the Codex Rossanensis. The characteristics of writing in different parts of Europe are easily discerned by comparing the Latin Bibles which were written in various countries. We should know practically nothing about that most interesting and curious blossoming of Irish art in the twelfth century were it not for the Biblical manuscripts, of which the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels are the most splendid specimens. The bare statement of the number of manuscripts shows us what an important relation the Bible has to these departments of literary research. There are now known over 2,000 Hebrew manuscripts containing the whole or parts of the Old Testament, the oldest of which is of the eleventh century. Of New Testament manuscripts there are known 112 uncial (*i. e.*, written in capital letters throughout, the oldest form of writing), and 2,429 cursive (written with small letters and in a running hand), beside 1,273 lectionaries (service books containing only the portions of Scripture read in church).† Of course very few of this large number are complete. Only

* This, the only important manuscript of the Latin Vulgate in the United States, is in the possession of Mr. Theodore Irwin of Oswego, N. Y.

† Kenyon, Our Bible and the ancient manuscripts, p. 120.

two contain all the books of the New Testament. Most cover only one section of the New Testament, Gospels, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, or Apocalypse. If we reduce the number as given by throwing out those counted more than once, there still remain nearly 3,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, a mass of material not approached in a remote degree by that of any other ancient book.

II. The pre-eminence of the Bible as a book appears, however, chiefly in its printed form. It holds the unique distinction of having been the first book printed with movable type, and it has been printed more times and in larger quantities than any other book in the world; yes, than any ten of the most popular books of the world combined.

1. It was surely a noble conception on the part of Johann Gutenberg, the inventor of typography, to consecrate, as it were, the work of the press at the very beginning by the printing of the Word of God. Who but an idealist, a dreamer, would think of such an undertaking at the outset of a new enterprise? But Gutenberg, confident of the success of his invention, was not daunted by fear of failure. He did not count the cost, evidently, for he became bankrupt right speedily. Yet there is something very attractive in the spectacle of this man, who after years of laborious experimenting and painful failures had perfected his invention, planning to glorify God by using it first of all for printing the Bible. It was Gutenberg's pious feeling and optimistic imagination that gave to the Bible this unique glory of being the first book printed with movable types. Indeed, there are two Bibles, both printed, undoubtedly, by Gutenberg, which are claimants for the honor of being the first. To be strictly accurate, neither of these was absolutely the first published fruit of the new process. There is evidence that a "Donatus," the boy's Latin Grammar of the day, a little book of twenty or thirty pages, was published, and perhaps printed, before either Bible. And certainly there were several editions of Letters of Indulgence printed in broadside, and, like legal documents of to-day, in blank to be filled in with date and the names of purchaser and dispenser. Eighteen copies of these Letters of Indulgence are extant, all bearing date of 1454 and 1455. It is evident, there-

fore, that Gutenberg did small jobs which were immediately remunerative, while he was busy with the more elaborate work of printing the Bible. Such an undertaking was a vast one, when we consider the facilities of the time. Fonts of type were small; there was no such thing as electrotyping. A few pages were set up at a time and printed, and the same type distributed and recomposed for use on other pages of the same book. The press was worked by hand, and none of the labor-saving devices of the modern printing office were available. It is estimated that the printing of the Bible under these conditions must have been a work of two or even three years.

That such an enterprise was undertaken is witness to the visionary character of the man. That it was carried through so successfully is evidence of that persistency which had given him the invention itself. Whether, then, the first was the Bible of thirty-six lines, so called from the number of lines on a page, or the Bible of forty-two lines, in either case it was the Bible in the Vulgate Latin version which was the first work of importance, in size and character, to be printed in the new method. The Bible of forty-two lines, often called the Mazarine, but better the Gutenberg Bible, has heretofore held the distinction of being the first and is generally assigned to the year 1455. That claim is now seriously disputed in favor of the Bible of thirty-six lines. It may be interesting to call attention to some characteristics of these first printed books. The Bible of forty-two lines is a large folio in two volumes, the first containing 324 leaves, and the second 317 leaves. There is no title page; space is left at the beginning of chapters for the insertion of ornamental initials by the illuminator. The types were made in imitation of the current manuscript style and are a large Gothic or German character. The imitation of the manuscript style extended even to the preparation of many compound letters and characters for standard abbreviations. In an ordinary book-font of English type to-day there are 226 characters, but these include numerals, punctuation marks, and a full set of small capitals. Of large capitals and small letters there are only sixty-six different sorts. In Gutenberg's font, on the other hand, there were 138 different characters aside from the three punctuation marks. These extra letters, compound letters, and abbreviated characters are

some of them quite difficult to decipher; only one versed in Mediaeval manuscripts can read the book with ease. On the first few pages of the Bible the summaries of the chapters were printed in red ink; in the rest of the book they are written in, part in red and part in black. Evidently the original plan of having them printed had to be given up.

The Bible of thirty-six lines has most of the characteristics of this Bible of forty-two lines, but it is printed from an entirely different and much larger set of types. It is a large folio of 1,764 pages, fifteen and three-quarters by eleven inches in size, and is usually bound in three volumes. Like the other, the text is in two columns on each page. Only half a dozen copies of this Bible are known to be in existence, and it is probable that the edition was very small. Of the Gutenberg Bible of forty-two lines there are thirty copies known, of which eight are printed upon vellum. Some copies, however, are quite fragmentary. In view of the fact that this is considered the first printed book, it is much sought after by collectors and has often brought more than its weight in gold. When Sir John Thorold's library was sold at auction in 1884 a copy of the forty-two line Bible brought £3,900, over \$19,000. In 1897 nearly \$20,000 was paid for a copy from the Ashburnham library by Bernard Quaritch, who later priced it in his catalogue at £5,000. The Ashburnham price has only been exceeded once for any book, and that was also for a portion of the Bible, when in the Thorold sale a copy of the Fust and Schoeffer Psalter of 1457 brought £4,950, or \$24,156.

These first Bibles are not only interesting because rare, they are also beautiful specimens of the printer's art which would do credit to any age or any printer. This is one of the astonishing things in regard to the invention of typography, that its first fruits were so perfect. Minerva-like, it seemed to spring full-formed from the mind of its inventor. The first Bibles were large folios, cumbrous to handle, and expensive to manufacture. In 1480 the first quarto Bibles appeared in Venice, and the next year the celebrated Froben, of Basle, the printer of Erasmus, issued the first in octavo.

2. As the Bible was the first book printed, it held its pre-eminence during the early years of the spread of the invention.

It is affirmed that up to the year 1490 “the Bible exceeded in amount of printing all other books put together.”* This is a wonderful record, and can only be accounted for by the strong demand on the part of readers. During the preceding centuries, Bibles had been so expensive that few were able to own an entire copy, and most, even of those in more than moderate circumstances, contented themselves with a portion only. Printing cheapened enormously the cost of production, and brought the Bible at once within the reach of vast numbers who had hitherto been unable to purchase it. It is estimated that there were more Bibles manufactured in the first fifty years of printing than in the three centuries immediately preceding. Printing spread from city to city with great rapidity in those first years, so that before the end of the year 1500, presses were set up in at least 247 places,† and it is certain that many of these early printers followed the example of Gutenberg and issued the Bible as one of their first works. In the first fifty years, *i. e.*, to the end of the year 1500, which period is usually taken as the infancy of printing, all works published in these years being termed incunabula, because printed while the art was, so to speak, in its cradle, — in these fifty years there were issued no less than 1,000 editions of the Bible or some of its parts. The next century witnessed no diminution in this volume, but rather an increase. While the editions of the Bible became relatively less, as compared with the whole mass of printed matter, they were absolutely very much more numerous. The influence of the circulation of the printed Bible upon the spread of the Reformation has often been remarked. Notice the provision for this desirable end. There were no less than 160 editions of the Latin Bible before 1517;‡ and Luther’s radical stand in appeal from the Pope to the Word seems to have stimulated the reading of the Bible, for before 1550 there were 174 more editions of the whole Bible in Latin, to say nothing of 167 of the Latin New Testament printed in the first fifty years of the sixteenth century, and nearly as many more of separate New Testament books. Twenty-seven editions of Erasmus’ Latin Testament issued in

* Stevens, *The Bible in the Caxton Exhibition, London, 1878*, p. 25.

† Reichhart, *Beiträge zur Incunabelkunde, Leipzig, 1895*.

‡ These and the following figures have been chiefly derived from a collation of Haine, L. Long-Masch, and Copinger.

the seven years 1518-1524 were accompanied by thirty-eight editions of his paraphrase (either the New Testament or its separate books) in the eight years 1517-1524. And Bible reading was not confined to the Latin language, universally as that was known. For the Old Testament in Hebrew was printed in 1488, the Bible in German in 1466, in Italian in 1471, and the New Testament in French in the same year. There were nearly fifty (forty-eight) editions of the whole Bible in the vernaculars of Europe before the Reformation, to say nothing of those containing only the New Testament or smaller portions. Luther's New Testament in German was issued in 1522, and editions followed in rapid succession in many cities of Germany. "Hans Luft alone printed 100,000 copies on his press at Wittenberg."* The sword of the Spirit was put into the hands of the people, and it proved a weapon mighty enough to overthrow the power of the Papacy in half of Europe.

Notwithstanding this evidence of an extensive circulation of the Scriptures in the Reformation time, we must remember that its high price still limited its widest distribution. Cheap as printed Bibles were in comparison with manuscripts, judged by modern standards they were very expensive. Luther's New Testament sold for eleven and one-half guilders, equal to about \$5. Others were correspondingly costly.

4. The forms in which the Bible was issued indicate the demand of the time. Churches needed pulpit Bibles, and the great folios supplied that need. Editions containing only the church lessons, or the Psalter, were also issued in great numbers, the number of Psalters exceeding that of New Testaments. For the benefit of the more ignorant priests there were furnished editions with glosses, as well as some of the sermons most popular in those days. Handier editions in octavo and even smaller sizes gave to students and the public generally what best suited their convenience.

5. From the beginning to the present time the Bible has held its pre-eminence as a printed book. No one will ever know how many editions of it have been issued, for the number is almost beyond computation, and for countless editions there is no record. The famous bibliographer and bookseller, Henry

* Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Rev. Ed., Vol. VI, 561.

Stevens, says: "We have been endeavoring for the last quarter of a century or more to compile as complete a list of printed Bibles and parts of Bibles as possible from the earliest period to the present time, and the remarkable result is a table of some 30,000 titles, representing about 35,000 volumes."* That was twenty years ago. Bibles have been issued in all styles of type, in all grades of workmanship, in all degrees of expense, in all measures of accuracy. The volume of editions and copies now pouring from the press is greater than ever before, and exceeds many fold that of any other single book.

6. The printing of the Bible has furnished occasion for some of the most remarkable feats of typography. At the time of the Caxton Exhibition in London in 1877 an edition of one hundred copies was printed from type in Oxford, and bound in London, all in the space of twelve hours. When the Revised Version of the English New Testament appeared in 1881, orders for a million copies were received before publication by the Oxford Press alone, and perhaps an equal number was ordered from the Cambridge Press. The sale of the Revised Testament opened in the United States on May 20th, amid scenes absolutely unparalleled in the book trade since the beginning of the world. It is said that 33,000 copies were sold on that day in New York.† They were hawked about the streets by newsboys and fakirs, and sold even under the shadow of the Stock Exchange. Two Chicago papers, the *Tribune* and *Times*, had a large part of the New Testament telegraphed from New York and sent it to their readers complete within two days of publication. The *Tribune* employed for the purpose ninety-two compositors and five correctors, and the whole work was completed in twelve hours. The *Times* had the four Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistle to the Romans telegraphed, and set up the remainder from a copy that was forwarded by rail. The portion telegraphed contains about 118,000 words and constitutes the longest despatch ever sent over the wires. A large number of papers followed the example of these in Chicago and sent the New Testament to their readers as a supplement to their regular issues. Besides this extensive newspaper circulation, there were as many as thirty editions

* Stevens, *Bible in The Caxton Exhibition*, p. 27.

† Schaff, *Companion to the Greek Testament*. N. Y., 1883, p. 403 ff.

issued in America before the close of the year. Who, in the light of these facts, can doubt the pre-eminence of the Bible among all books. Of no other could such things be possible.

7. In connection with the printed Bible we may notice another and a unique form in which the Bible has appeared. Very few books have ever been printed in polyglot form, *i. e.* in many languages in the same volume; but there are many examples of this in the case of the Bible. The Greek Old Testament and New Testament were neither of them printed until Cardinal Ximines began his great undertaking of issuing the whole Bible in the original languages with the Greek version of the Old Testament and the Vulgate Latin of the whole. This magnificent work was undertaken in order to revive the study of the Scriptures, and was carried out in a most lavish manner. The best scholars that could be obtained were employed at high salaries. The cost of the work was about \$150,000, not one-twelfth of which sum could have been received from the sale if every copy had found a purchaser. Only 600 were printed. The Old Testament is given in three languages in parallel columns, the Latin occupying the central place of honor between the Hebrew and the Greek, this arrangement signifying, as the Cardinal states in his Prolegomena, that Christ, *i. e.*, the Roman or Latin Church, was crucified between two robbers, *i. e.*, the Jewish Synagogue, and the schismatical Greek Church. The New Testament is given only in Greek and Latin. The sixth and last volume is filled with lexicons and indices. Begun in 1502, the New Testament volume was printed in 1514, the last of the Old Testament in 1517, but the approval of the Pope was not given until 1520, and even then there was some delay, so that the work was not actually put on the market until 1522. The worthy Cardinal did not live to see the consummation of his desire, although shortly before his death there was brought to him the last volume as it came from the press.

The example thus set was followed many times in the next 200 years. The Polyglot of Ximines called the Complutensian from its place of publication had already become so rare by the middle of the century that Plantin, the celebrated printer of Antwerp, determined upon a reprint with additions. He secured the recommendation of Cardinal Spinosa, through whom he re-

ceived the aid of Philip II of Spain. Philip not only furnished the means for the publication, but also sent one of the most learned priests of Spain, Arias Montanus, to Antwerp to superintend the whole work. The first four volumes contain the Old Testament. Besides the Hebrew text there are also the LXX Greek, the Vulgate Latin, and the Targums in Chaldee or Aramaic. Volume 5 contains the New Testament in Greek, Latin, and Syriac. Three more volumes contain dictionaries and grammars of the various languages, sundry indexes, a treatise on Sacred Antiquities, and a complete version of the Bible into Latin by Sanctes Pagninus, which was improved by Montanus. Of this splendid work, issued in 1569-72, only 500 copies were printed, and the greater part of these were lost at sea while being transported to Spain. It is interesting to note that for these two costly editions of the Bible in polyglot form, one of which, the Complutensian, contains the first printed Greek Bible, we are indebted to Spain, to two Cardinals of the Roman Church, and to that cruel tyrant Philip II.

The Antwerp Polyglot was almost immediately a rare book on account of the loss of so large a portion of the edition. Proposition was made to reprint it by another Cardinal (what holy emulation in the sacred college in so noble a cause). This time it was a Frenchman, Cardinal DuPerron. Some work had been done when the Cardinal died, and finally LeJay, attorney of Parliament, undertook to carry it through. Printing began in 1628, but the work was not completed until 1645. Parts 1-4 contain the Old Testament of the Antwerp Polyglot, *i. e.*, in Hebrew, Chaldee, Greek, and Latin; part 5 has the New Testament in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic in two volumes; part 6 contains the Samaritan Pentateuch, here printed for the first time, and also the Samaritan, Arabic, and Syriac versions of the same, with a Latin translation of each; parts 7-9 contain the rest of the Old Testament in Arabic and Syriac. LeJay invested the whole of his property in the production of this truly magnificent work, but its high price and unwieldy size deterred many would-be purchasers, the appearance of the London Polyglot drove it out of the market, and LeJay was utterly ruined and compelled to dispose of the last of the edition as waste paper. No one can look at the ten stupendous volumes of this edition without

admiring the audacity that planned so great an undertaking. And he cannot behold the wide margins, the fine press work, and the generally sumptuous air of the book without regretting that so splendid a monument of the press, so noble an edition of the sacred Scriptures, should have brought such disaster to its projector. It was a repetition of the experience of Gutenberg. The enterprise was too vast for the resources of the promoter, and the result too expensive for the purse of the public.

With a better conception of the possibilities of such work, as well as a keener sense of the value of good scholarship, did Bishop Walton project his Polyglot published in London in 1657-61. Less magnificent than those which had preceded, it was far more valuable. Bishop Walton was a Royalist and lost his preferment at the time of the Revolution. During his retirement he devoted himself to this work. It was issued under the patronage of Cromwell, who allowed the paper for it to be imported free of duty. He is thanked in the preface for his aid; but when Charles II was restored, this acknowledgment was withdrawn and a dedication to the King inserted, so that there are so called Republican and Royal copies. The six folio volumes contain the Bible in nine languages, although no one book appears in so many. A feature of great value is the mass of various readings which occupies a part of the sixth volume. This was a Protestant work, and accordingly soon after its publication it was put on the Index Prohibitorum by Pope Alexander VII. These four editions are called the great polyglots and are a unique monument of printing.* They are by no means the only representatives of this style of printing the Bible. From the Polyglot of Hutter, in 1599, down to the latest issues of the English and German press, there have been many polyglot Bibles, besides the vast number of diglot or bi-lingual editions, with Latin or some modern tongue and another less well known, from the Greek-Latin Psalter of 1481, or the Latin-German New Testament of 1509, to the latest issue of the Bible Society, which prints the New Testament in some African or Indian language together with the English. No other book has ever received such treatment, and the Bible in this respect also is seen to be the Book of Books.

* Fine copies of these four rare editions are to be found in the Seminary Library.

III. The pre-eminence of the Bible as a book is shown still further in its wide dissemination, in its extensive translation.

1. The Bible was written originally in three languages, the Old Testament in Hebrew, with the exception of portions of the books of Ezra and Daniel, which are in Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek. Before the Christian era the Jews had made a translation of their Scriptures into Greek, which was more widely understood than any other language of antiquity, and also into the Samaritan, which is a form of Aramaic. There were thus three languages that had been blessed with the Revelation of God before the coming of Christ. At the beginning of the Christian Church there was not at once need of further translation, for wherever the Apostles went they found Greek-speaking people. This was the universal language of trade, and in the first narrow circle of the Apostolic labors it proved a sufficient medium of communication. Moreover, so long as there were personal witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, there was not the same necessity for a written word. Only gradually were the Christian Scriptures collected and circulated with authority. But after the first century the circle of Christian activity widened, and new populations were reached who were not so familiar with Greek. Then the prophecy contained in the gift of tongues at Pentecost began to reach its larger fulfilment in the gift to all peoples of the written word in their own languages in which they were born.

The beginning of Bible translation had apparently a dogmatic and a liturgical motive. The desire for authoritative statements of the facts of the life of Jesus, and the doctrines of the Christian faith, which led to the original composition of Gospels and Epistles, led also to their translation for the benefit of those who could not understand the original Greek. The necessities of the church service gave an impulse in the same direction. The lessons read in the services, if they were to be understood by the people, must be in the language of the people, and so the Bible was translated for the purpose. The number of manuscript lectionaries in many of the early versions is a proof of this point. Out of this doctrinal and liturgical necessity then arose the first versions of the Bible into the vernacular.

2. The field of the Church in the first six centuries was the

Roman Empire, and it is interesting to notice how largely the languages of the empire received the Bible during that period. First in order of time, came probably the Syriac, in the second century. This was the language of Palestine and the neighboring regions; and we have knowledge of four and possibly five versions into this tongue before the year 616, besides a version into the Judean dialect of the Syriac, made in the fifth century. Closely following the Syriac came versions into the five dialects of Egypt in the second and third centuries, and many versions into Latin, made in North Africa, in Italy, and in Gaul, at about the same time. These latter were superseded by the Latin version of Jerome in the fourth century, which has since been known as the Vulgate. In this same early period of the Church the Bible, or parts of it, was translated into Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Georgic. So the circle of the Roman world was completed. As these versions were, in the first instance, made to serve an ecclesiastical purpose, so in turn they became the means of isolating the branches of the Church using them from each other, and from the mother church. They played no small part in the erection of the independent ecclesiastical establishments of the East as over against the great Roman Church, which in those centuries was steadily assuming prerogatives of dominion over all divisions of the empire. Who can consider the fact that every one of the early divisions of the Church had its own vernacular Bible without realizing that the schism which rent them from the main body was nourished by that version in their own tongue, which was to them an independent source of authority and prevented their weak yielding to a centralized hierarchy.

3. The next period of church history includes the years from 600 to 1400, the so-called Middle Ages. In this period the field of the Church was chiefly the continent of Europe, and her work was the conquest of the tribes of the North and the hordes of barbarians who swept into Europe from the far East. Where the Church went, there went also the Bible. Missionaries of that day, as of this, were forward in translating the Bible for the benefit of their converts, and no less than twenty-two versions of the Scriptures appeared in this period, including practically all the languages of Europe, those which were formed by the dialectic modification of the Latin, like Italian, French, Spanish,

and the transitional Romance, as well as the Teutonic dialects of the north, German, Swedish, Dutch, Anglo-Saxon, English, with the Celtic tongues, Erse and Kymrish, the Slavonic, and its kindred Bohemian and Polish; while far to the east appeared versions in Persic and Tartar. In not all of these languages was the whole Bible translated; in some only a small part, but still it is true that before the Reformation, and before the invention of printing, the peoples of Europe and Western Asia and Northern Africa were supplied with the Scriptures in their own languages. We may say what we will about the ignorance of the masses in the Middle Ages, and the practice of the Roman Church in keeping the Bible from the laity, which charges are not without truth, and yet these monuments of Bible translation are evidence of a spirit that was true, and a life that was vigorous, and a method that was right. Where the gospel messenger went there he carried the Word of God as a torch, and it lightened many a dark corner of the world.

4. In the Reformation period, from 1400 to 1600, there were versions prepared in twelve different languages and dialects, all located in Europe, making more complete the work of the preceding centuries.

5. In the next period, one of dogmatic controversy and of spiritual coldness and inactivity, from 1600 to 1800, there are noticed seventeen new dialects blessed with versions, ten of them in Europe; and we find also the first fruits of the new missionary activity in John Eliot's Bible in the Algonquin Indian tongue, which has been said to be the "first case in history of the translation and printing of the entire Bible in a new language as a means of evangelization."* With this belong Ziegenbalg's Tamil version (1714), and versions of Dutch missionaries in Formosan (1661), and Malay (1610?), and Sinhali (1739).

6. The present century, however, will always be known as the great Bible translating century, as it is the great missionary century of the Christian Church. Indeed, the two movements have sprung from the same motives, and have gone hand in hand. Almost the first work of the modern missionary when he goes among a new people, so soon as he has learned the language, is to

* Dr. E. W. Gilman in Report of the Centenary Conference on Missions, 1888. Vol. II, 287.

begin translating the Bible. His first attempts are likely to be very crude, owing to imperfect knowledge of the language, but as greater facility is gained in the native speech, and particularly as some native converts are trained in the work of assistance, revisions are made and after a time a standard version is finished. Often the first publication is of a single Gospel or Epistle in order to test the efficiency of the version. So, in the Hawaiian, the Gospel of Luke was published in 1827, while the New Testament was not ready until 1836, and the whole Bible not until 1839.

Since the year 1800, versions of the whole or a part of the Bible have been made in 385 languages and dialects, and with every year the number is increased. Doubtless on many a missionary's table there lie to-day tentative experiments in Bible translation, which in a few years will be published in London or New York and then be carried back to bless the native races for which they have been prepared. Let one stand before the large case in the Museum of this Seminary and look at the 240 versions there displayed, and he must gain a new sense of the amount of learning and consecrated labor that has gone into this work of translation. In many cases the missionary finds a language without a literature or even without writing. It is necessary, frequently, to re-create the language by the infusion of new words, to reduce the spoken words to writing, and even to invent an alphabet in which they may be written, as Ulfila did for the Goths, and the native Guess for the Cherokee tribe of Indians. As one looks at that case of specimens let him remember that what are there shown represent only one-half of the large number that have been made by the messengers of Christ in all the centuries. The work of the present century appears the more noteworthy when we recall the fact that up to the year 1800 there were only sixty-six languages and dialects in which, so far as we know, any portion of the Scriptures had been translated, while during this century the number has swelled to 451. This, let it be noted, is the number of distinct languages or mutually unintelligible dialects into which some portion of the Bible has been translated. No account is made of the different versions or revisions in a single language, nor even of the publication of the same version in many different forms;

as for example, the Armenian is printed not only in the Armenian, but also in the Arabic and the Greek characters. So the German and Spanish versions are printed in Hebrew letters for the benefit of German and Spanish Jews who know the vernacular language, but have learned to read only the Hebrew alphabet. Many languages having characters of their own, like the Chinese and Japanese, are being printed also in the Roman alphabet. These varied forms, interesting as they are, do not make distinct languages and are not considered in our enumeration.

Of course, in a majority of these languages only a portion, often only a small portion, of the Bible has been translated, and there are still a large number of languages untouched, so that there yet remains work enough for the brain and hand of the twentieth century. It is estimated that the total number of languages and dialects spoken by more than 1,400 millions of the population of the globe is at least 2,000. In comparison with this, 451 seems a very small number, but we must remember that these 451 languages represent 1,200 millions of people, while the remaining 1,500 languages are spoken by only 200 millions. Moreover, many of these tongues are fast disappearing; the great conquering languages will more and more dominate the world, and in the meanwhile the goal is being ever more nearly approached of giving the entire Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to every race under the whole expanse of heaven in its own language.

7. This practice is in striking contrast to the great non-Christian religions, whose sacred books are not translated. The Koran is read in Arabic even where that language is not understood. Christian scholars are responsible for its translation into many tongues, and the same is true of the Vedas and the Avesta. The Buddhist Scriptures have been imported into Japan and copied there for centuries, but no Japanese version has been made.

This immense mass of Bible translation is furthermore almost exclusively the work of the Protestant churches. The Roman Church in clinging to the Latin Vulgate in a dead language is but imitating the heathen example. To be sure, most of the versions before 1600 were made under the auspices of the Roman

Church. And since that time there have been many versions into the vernacular made by those in fellowship with that body. But in nearly every case these recent versions have been in languages already supplied with Protestant versions, and they were made in order to offset and destroy the influence those were exerting on the people. Her theory that the Church is the sole custodian and interpreter of the truth has led the Roman Catholic Church to insist upon her own versions and her own editions. No version is to be used unless it conforms to the Vulgate, and all editions of the Vulgate must agree with that of Clement VIII printed at Rome in 1592.

This Protestant policy of giving the Bible at once to new peoples, and using the Scriptures as an instrument in evangelism is amply justified by the history of missions. We cite an illustration or two.* In the Congo region of Africa the Portuguese had control for 200 years after 1500. Under their protection the Romish priests evangelized the country. Thousands upon thousands were baptized; masses and penances, crucifixes and confessionals, were abundant; but there was no version of the New Testament and no attempt to instruct the people in the word. When the Portuguese power fell and the priests were compelled to withdraw, the whole people lapsed at once, and soon not a trace of Christianity remained.

A similar thing happened in Japan. The once flourishing church subjected to persecution, after a brave resistance, succumbed; it had no vernacular Bible to feed its life.

Contrast with these the case of Madagascar. In 1834 the first converts were baptized after eleven years of effort; in two years the missionaries were forced to leave, but they left behind 5,000 copies of the Bible in the native tongue. In spite of the fiercest persecution of the heathen government, in spite of the severest penalties visited upon those who read the Bible, in spite of the martyrdom of thousands in the next twenty-five years, that church, nourished by the living stream of God's word, remained steadfast and even increased in membership from 200 to 1,000. History speaks with no uncertain voice on this subject. No mission work is effective and permanent that does not give the

* Cf. Dr. E. W. Gilman, in Report of the Centenary Conference on Missions, London, 1888. Vol. II, 288.

Bible to the people. The failure of the Roman Catholic missions in China, in Japan, in India, and in North America is evidence of this. Their missionaries were as devoted and as persistent and as learned as those of Protestant Churches, but their work has disappeared from the sight of men.

Not only has the Bible thus proved a most valuable ally to the missionary; it has often become a missionary itself, and many a congregation has been gathered and instructed in the truth through the medium of a copy of the Scriptures. A copy of the Bible bought by a native and carried back to his country home is the means of the conversion of a whole village in Brazil. A copy found in a cast-off garment leads numbers in a Chinese village into the truth. Similar stories might be told of every quarter of the globe. The Word of God is its own witness, and in its printed form becomes a messenger of the gospel.

8. So vast has this work of issuing the Bible become, so important is it felt to be as a means of evangelization, that large societies have been formed which devote themselves to this one thing, the printing and circulation of the Word. Missionary societies often add this to other phases of their work, but during the last century the Bible societies have been the chief agencies in this enterprise. Always co-operating with the missionary societies, they have also supplemented their work, and their porters have gone into many regions yet unreached by distinctively missionary labor. Since 1804, when the British and Foreign Bible Society was organized, the first in time as it has always been the greatest in achievement of all such agencies, there have been no less than eighty Bible societies formed, besides numberless auxiliaries of these. Our own American Bible Society, organized in 1816, is second in size and importance and efficiency. It is encouraging to notice that with very few exceptions these are all undenominational agencies. Although Christian people have not yet been able to unite for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the heathen, for the most part they have been able to work together in the printing and circulation of translations of the Scriptures. In this, again, the Bible is raised aloft above every other book. Of no other can it be said that large, permanent publishing houses have been established for the express

purpose of issuing them. And few, if any, publishing houses of any sort equal in amount of business the nearly four million copies issued annually by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

IV. There are many other features connected with the printing and circulation of the Bible which it would be interesting to dwell upon if there were time.

1. We should like to describe the people's Bibles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At that period of history there were few of the common people who could read or write, and even many of the priests could not read their Bibles. So, for the benefit of the poor preaching friars, as a means of helping them to expound the Gospel message, and also to teach the people the Bible truth through the eye as well as the ear, there were issued a large variety of books dealing with the Bible story in one form or another. Usually the life of Christ was taken for a basis. One page would contain a picture of some scene in his life with a few words of explanation. The opposite page would contain some illustration of that scene, or typical representation of it, drawn from some other part of Scripture. For example, the death and resurrection of Jesus were illustrated from the story of Jonah. These books were called block-books, because each page was printed from a single engraved block of wood. There were more than a score of such printed in numberless editions in the fifty years before the invention of typography. So popular were they that editions with type-set descriptions continued to appear even to the close of the fifteenth century. The predominantly religious character of these and other early books is an indication of the fact that learning was chiefly confined to ecclesiastics, and that the knight and the serf equally found their pleasure in other than literary ways.

2. The student of the early versions into European languages is struck by the fact that in many instances the earliest form of the vernacular Bible was poetical. We must remember that these nations were at this time Christian. The people were familiar with the truth of the Bible; but in their own language they had none of its words. The first attempt to give the Bible to the people in their own tongue often took the form of metrical versions of the narrative portions, such as Genesis and the histor-

ical books of the Old Testament, and especially the Gospels. Of this character is the rhymed Harmony of the Gospels in Low Saxon known as Otfried's Christ. Such is the Heliand, a heroic poem with a Gospel basis, in the same language, and both belonging probably to the ninth century. Such is the Ormulum in our own English, and the earlier paraphrases of Caedmon in Anglo-Saxon.

Illustrating another form of adaptation of the same sort is the Historia Scholastica of Petrus Comestor. Written in the year 1170, this work was translated into many of the European languages, and was printed over and over again in the early days of the art. It consists of a somewhat free use of the Vulgate, interspersed with annotations from profane history and with scholastic explanations. The French version of this, made by Guyard des Moulins in 1294, followed the Vulgate text more closely and more completely, and with some additions appeared in 1477 as the first printed French Bible. Of similar character was the Aurea Biblia of Rampigollis, which was exceedingly popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Golden Legend of Jacobus á Voragine may also be mentioned here, for, while it contains many stories of the saints, and much apocryphal material regarding Jesus, it yet does give the Gospel story.

3. It is one of the anomalies of history that the organized body of Christ which would seem to be most interested in the circulation of the Bible has been most active in its suppression. To be sure, the censorship of the press was no new idea. From the beginning of the making of books there has been the exercise of the right to forbid and to permit certain books. State and Church, heathen emperor, Mohammedan caliph, and Christian bishop alike have destroyed works they considered harmful either to the truth or to their own dominion. When books were printed it needed but an extension of this principle, vicious though it was, in order to bring forth the condemnation of council and Pope, Parliament and King, the burning of forbidden editions, the rule of censorship and the Index Prohibitorum. It is noticeable that the issuance of decrees against books really began with the printing of them. Perhaps before that, in the manuscript period, it was easier to control the matter. Books were few,

the copying of them was laborious, and the number of copies was limited. But when the printing press began to pour out its thousands of volumes some more vigorous measure was needed. Besides, so long as the dominion of the Roman Church was not in danger, she had less fear of heretical books; but when the revival of learning and the Lutheran Reformation threatened to overthrow that dominion she at once used decisive means to suppress all hostile publications. What is surprising and will always remain incapable of defense is the fact that in suppressing heresy she thought it necessary to suppress the Bible. Berthold, Archbishop of Mainz, the very birthplace of the printer's art, was the first to undertake the restriction of the press. On January 10, 1486, he prohibited the translation of books from Latin, Greek, or other languages, into the vulgar tongue, or their sale when translated, except upon the approval of certain doctors and masters of the University of Erfurt. This edict, although couched in general terms, was really aimed at the German Bible, of which several editions had already appeared. In 1559 the first official list of prohibited books was issued by Pope Paul IV. In this, all Bibles in modern languages were forbidden, and forty-eight editions were particularly specified, while the general clause, "and all similar editions," was intended to cut off all vernacular versions from the faithful.

From this first Index down to the present time there has been no material change in the policy of the Roman Church in regard to this matter, except where, as in this country, the prevalence of Protestant sentiment has forced a modification. The Holy Office of the Inquisition has repeatedly laid its withering hand upon the Bible. Its last work in Italy in the present century was to prevent if possible the circulation of the Italian version. In Spain it has been impossible, it is even now not wholly safe in all parts, to attempt to distribute a vernacular Bible, while in South America the agents of the Bible societies have repeatedly met with abuse and persecution at the hands of the priests. It would be most interesting to trace the development of the condemnation of the Bible, and to show how the Protestant schism, springing as it did from a study of the Word, and supported as it has always been by an appeal to the Word, has forced the

Roman Church into an attitude of opposition to the free circulation of the Scriptures.

We cannot forget in the history of our own English Bible the names of John Wycliff, opposed, threatened, tried again and again, and only preserved by the strong friendship of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and of William Tyndale, an exile, a hunted fugitive, printing in secret, hurrying presses and printed sheets from city to city in order to escape the vigilance of his enemies, and at last suffering martyrdom because of his unquenchable desire to give the gospel to his nation in their own tongue. Nor can we forget the picture of Bishop Tonstall of London buying up the copies of Tyndale's Testament in order to burn them publicly, nor the interruption of the printing of the Great Bible in Paris by the intrigue of the Inquisition in spite of the royal permission. The attitude of the Roman Church is perhaps well set forth in the words of Henry Knighton, the Canon of Leicester, and a bitter enemy of Wycliff. "The Gospel which Christ committed to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might sweetly dispense it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of the times and the wants of the people, hungering after it in their mind, this John Wycliff has translated out of Latin into the Anglican, not angelic language; whence through him it has been published and disclosed more openly to laymen and women able to read than it used to be to the most learned and intelligent of the clergy. And so the gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden underfoot of swine; and what was dear to clergy and laity is now rendered, as it were, the common jest of both; so that the gem of the Church becomes the derision of laymen, and that is now theirs forever, which before was the special property of the clergy and doctors."*

Inspired, as we believe, by a true desire to promote the truth, yet led into strangely mistaken measures, the Roman Church has consistently, from the beginning, opposed giving the Bible to the people in the vernacular. Not content with withholding the wine of the sacrament, she has withheld also the refreshing water of the revealed Word. The Bible in the Roman Church has been a book permitted, not enjoined, a treasure to be guarded, not a spiritual food to be dispensed.

* Quoted in the English Hexapla, p. 8.

We cannot pause to speak of the vast literature in opposition and defense, in explanation and criticism, to which the Bible has given rise, nor of the prodigious expenditure of toil in its study. These and other interesting phases of our subject we must pass without further detail.

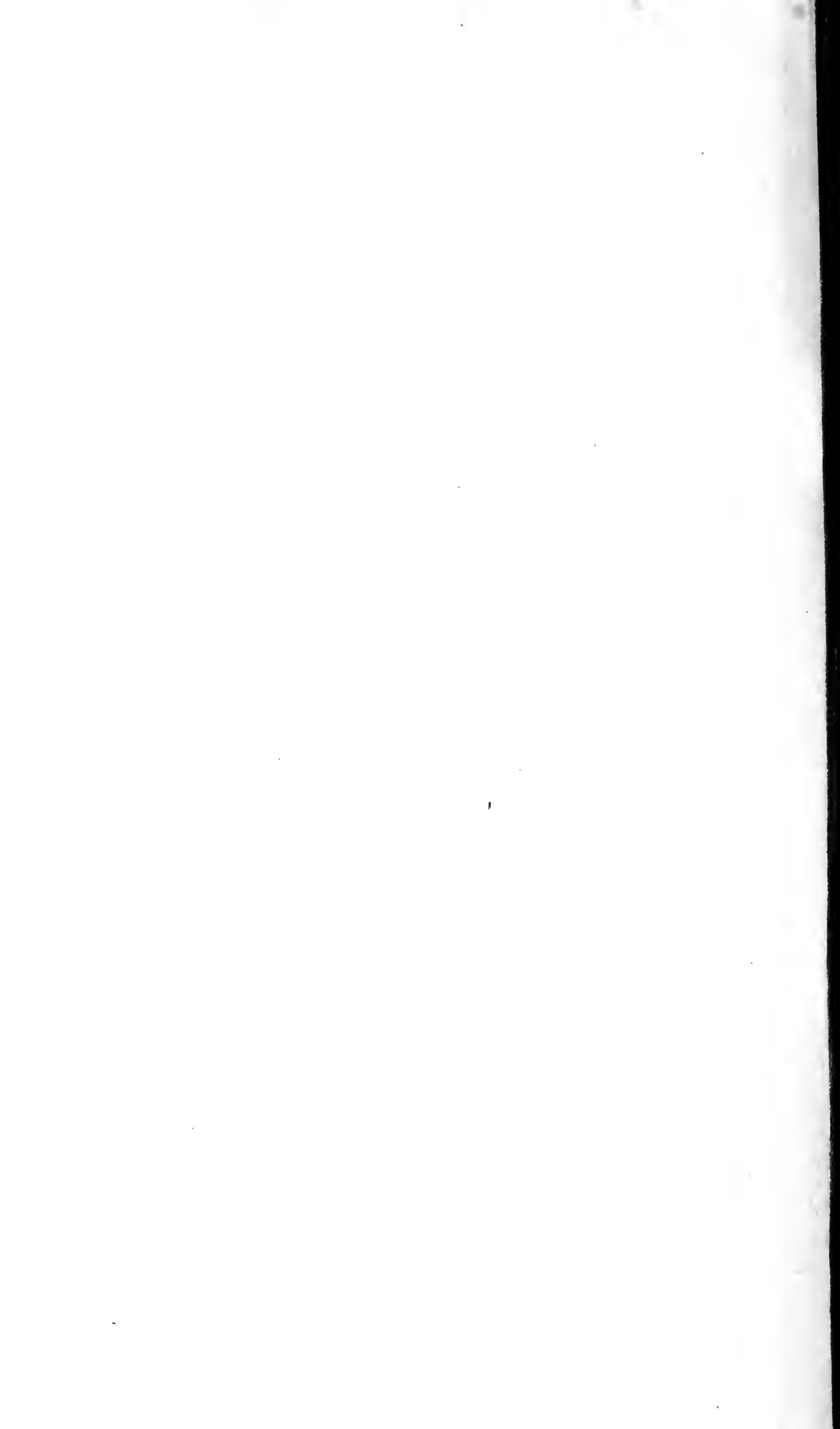
As we look back now over the path we have come, are we not more firmly assured than ever that this Bible which lies at the foundation of our faith, which is "the only perfect rule of faith and practice" is, even in those external features which are subordinate, shown to be the Book of Books? In the abundance and variety and beauty of its manuscripts, in the priority and multiplicity of its printed editions, in the unique forms in which it has been set forth and the thrilling incidents of which it has been the occasion, in the multitude of its versions into strange tongues and in the extent of its distribution over all the earth, in the number and range of books to which it has given rise, in the intensity of the opposition to it and the unquenchable zeal with which its promoters have been inspired, in the missionary activities it has supported and the spiritual results flowing from its bare circulation, — in all these respects it is seen to be pre-eminent as a book.

We have dwelt only on that which is superficial in regard to this book. It is because there is something more than the superficial in it that these facts acquire any significance or interest. When the Eternal Word tabernacled in the flesh every utterance and every deed, every look and gesture assumed a beauty and glory derived from the divine personality from which they flowed. And so when the divine revelation was made to appear in a human form, clothed in the language of men, and borne from land to land in the guise of human books, then every fact relating to that appearance and every item of the historical transmission of that word from age to age and from nation to nation becomes of value and worthy of the attention of those who love the Word for what it is and because they hear through the human language the very voice of God.

We in this Seminary taking our stand on the Word seek to comprehend it more fully, and to interpret it more accurately. We learn to distinguish the external and human from the in-

ternal and divine, but both we seek to know more thoroughly, that the purposes of God through His Word may be the more perfectly made known to men.



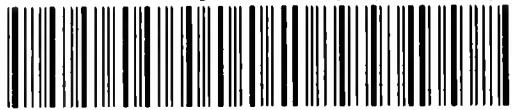


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